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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 001169

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SUBJECT: PRC SCHOLARS SHARE VIEWS ON AFRICOM, SOMALIA,  
PEACEKEEPING, DRC

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.  
4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: China "shares African concerns" about U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)'s perceived "militarization" of U.S. policy in Africa, according to two Chinese scholars on Africa. Our contacts expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of prosecuting Somali pirates and urged the United States to give China a concrete proposal for cooperating on combating piracy. The scholars said China would continue to participate in UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) while showing "strategic patience" and avoiding a "hasty approach." The withdrawal of Indian peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was unlikely to affect China's investments in the country. End summary.

Skepticism about AFRICOM  
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12. (C) In an April 28 meeting to exchange views on AFRICOM's mission and programs, Ministry of State Security-affiliated China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) Institute of Asia and Africa Studies scholars Xu Weizhong and Zeng Qiang expressed skepticism about AFRICOM's stated objectives. Xu said African scholars and officials had told him that they were suspicious of AFRICOM and concerned about what they perceived as the "militarization" of U.S. policy in Africa. He argued that the assignment of State Department and USAID officials to AFRICOM had created the impression that the military was in command of all U.S. activities in Africa. Zeng suggested that African countries' unwillingness to host AFRICOM headquarters reflected their concerns about AFRICOM's true objectives. He also questioned the "contradiction" in U.S. policy in Africa of promoting both government capacity-building and democratization, stating that promoting democracy in some African countries would weaken the state's ability to maintain peace and security.

Somalia  
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13. (C) Questioning whether other countries wanted China to prosecute Somali pirates, Xu stated that such prosecutions would require "special courts" but would not succeed in deterring piracy. Xu suggested the United States put forward a detailed, concrete proposal for cooperation with China on combating piracy.

Peacekeeping Operations in Africa  
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¶4. (C) Xu said China would continue to contribute to peacekeeping operations (PKOs) in Africa as long as they were under the UN framework and had the consent and cooperation of African countries. China had to demonstrate "strategic patience" and avoid a "hasty approach," Xu said, in deciding its participation in PKOs. Asked about the recent NGO International Crisis Group report on China's peacekeeping in Africa, Zeng acknowledged a lack of coordination between Chinese ministries involved in peacekeeping. He said each ministry had its own interests and "a unified approach is sometimes difficult to find."

Democratic Republic of Congo

¶5. (C) Zeng downplayed concerns about the impact of the withdrawal of Indian peacekeepers from the DRC on China's investment in the country. He said most Chinese investment was in DRC's southern region while the conflict was in the east, adding that the security situation in the DRC was improving. Xu said China would be unlikely to send peacekeepers to the DRC but would continue to support the UN PKO in the DRC while showing "strategic patience."

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